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STURMINSTER RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL.



Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health for
the Year 1941

This Report is prepared on the lines asked for by the Minister of Health in Circular 2314. In accordance with his directions, most information usually contained in the Report is omitted and filed for future reference. Statistics, while being collated and recorded, are only quoted in this Report where they are of particular significance.

Infectious Disease

The Isolation Hospital of the North Dorset Joint Hospital Board (of which your Authority is a constituent member), was destroyed by fire during the early part of the year, and was replaced by a temporary Isolation Hospital of 26 beds established at Vine House, Sturminster Newton.

A mild dysentery spread throughout several parts of the district during the year (in common with other parts of the country), but the disease was of a mild character and of short duration. No deaths were reported as a result of it.

With regard to other infectious diseases, only seven cases of Scarlet Fever were notified during the year and no case of Diphtheria.

Diphtheria Immunisation

The end of the first nine months of the Council's Scheme providing immunisation against Diphtheria, free of cost, to all children between the ages of one and fifteen years, showed that 72% of children of school age had received treatment, but only 18% of children under school age.

Scabies

This has been the major public health problem during the year. The disease is not a statutory notifiable disease and therefore no accurate figures are available to demonstrate the increase in the prevalence of the condition in your area during the year - as the condition was equally prevalent throughout the North Dorset District, the figures of admission to the Sick Bay from the whole North Dorset District give a clear indication of the increased incidence of the disease.

In 1939 (during the last three months of the year) 8 cases (equivalent to 32 in a full year), were admitted to the Sick Bay.

In 1940 the comparable figure was 45.

In 1941 the comparable figure was 214.

In anticipation of similar public health problems if overcrowding was allowed to occur as a result of the unwise billeting of evacuees, a warning was given to Billeting Officers in August 1940. In order to facilitate ascertainment and early treatment you sought powers to make this disease compulsorily notifiable in March 1941. You were not able to obtain these powers. Throughout the year your policy with regard to Scabies

has been to provide in-patient Sick Bay treatment for all cases where this was requested by a Medical Practitioner, and to carry out disinfection of clothes and bedclothes. The weakness in your Scheme for dealing with this condition has been the absence of means by which all cases, and home contacts, coming to the notice of your Medical Officer of Health could be fully investigated, and treatment offered to those found by investigation to be sufferers, together with follow up of cases after treatment so that cases showing a recurrence of the condition could be dealt with immediately before further persons had become infected by them. To close this gap in your Scheme, and to enable you to put into effect the Scabies Order 1941, your Medical Officer of Health advised you in December 1941 to appoint, in conjunction with the other Districts in North Dorset, a Public Health Nurse with clerical assistance. Unless full and complete measures are adopted to deal with Scabies as now established, I can see no reason to anticipate but that its increased incidence will remain established in the district.

Sanitary Work

The most disturbing matter to which I have again to draw your attention is the degree to which the routine work of the Sanitary Inspector (in his capacity as Sanitary Inspector) is being interfered with by calls on the services of the Inspector by other matters more directly concerned with the war situation (Billeting, Evacuation, Civil Defence etc.). When it is noted that in 1941 only 358 Sanitary Inspections (for all purposes), were carried out, as against 1256 during the year 1938, the present position can be better appreciated.

I had to draw your attention to this matter in my last Annual Report and did so again in a Special Report during the year.

I must again advise you that it is neither desirable nor safe for the services of a qualified Sanitary Inspector to be monopolised with duties detrimental to his carrying out his normal sanitary supervision and control in the district - particularly in relation to milk production.

Evacuation

As compared with 1940, the number of new evacuees arriving or remaining in the district was reduced. Steps were taken, however, to provide facilities for those in the district. Communal feeding arrangements have been established to serve all Parishes, and now there is no school in the district where facilities for a hot midday meal are absent. From a public health point of view, in addition to the amenity offered, I consider this to be an excellent provision on the part of the Local Authority.

During the year the number of beds available for Sick Bay cases from the whole of the North Dorset District increased to 39 by the transfer of the Sick Bay from Vine House, Sturminster Newton to Plumber Manor, Sturminster Newton. During the year 212 cases were admitted to the Sick Bay from your district.

A Residential Nursery of twelve cots for 'under-fives' was established at "The Firs" Shillingstone, for short-stay cases, and during the year "The Hollies" Sturminster Newton was established as a Hostel of fourteen beds, under the Evacuation Scheme, for the reception of 'difficult' girls.

"The Thatch" at Stalbridge, an Evacuation Hostel for twelve delinquent boys has served a most useful purpose throughout

the year. All the credit for the excellent results achieved with the difficult cases admitted there must be shared by the Matron of the Hostel and the Head Teacher of Stalbridge Senior School.

Ready reciprocal use, by all the Authorities in North Dorset, of the various Evacuation Hostels and Nurseries within the several districts, has been achieved by the ready goodwill and mutual assistance of each of the Chief Billeting Officers.

In termination I would record, with gratitude, the courtesy and support given to me by your Council, the assistance given to me by your other Officers and the efficient service rendered by my clerk.

NOEL F. PEARSON,

Medical Officer of Health.

1st May, 1942.

